

Multiple Disabilities

What are Multiple Disabilities?

According to the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) § 15-761(17), " 'Multiple disabilities' means learning and developmental problems resulting from multiple disabilities as determined by evaluation... that cannot be provided for adequately in a program designed to meet the needs of children with less complex disabilities. Multiple disabilities include any of the following conditions that require the provision of special education and related services:

(a) Two or more of the following conditions

- (i) Hearing impairment.
- (ii) Orthopedic Impairment.
- (iii) Moderate mental retardation.
- (iv) Visual impairment.

(b) A child with a disability listed in subdivision (a) of this paragraph existing concurrently with a condition of mild mental retardation, emotional disability or specific learning disability."

In addition, the Arizona Revised Statutes, § 15-761(18) notes " 'Multiple disabilities with severe sensory impairment' means multiple disabilities that include at least one of the following:

(a) Severe visual impairment or severe hearing impairment in combination with another severe disability.

(b) Severe visual impairment and severe hearing impairment."

Severe and/or multiple disabilities are terms used to describe the often intense and complex combinations of medical, physical, developmental, and/or behavioral characteristics an individual might have.

How Common are Multiple Disabilities?

In the 2001-02 school year, 2,505 Arizona students were classified as having multiple disabilities (MD) or multiple disabilities with severe sensory impairments (MDSSI) and received special education

services. This number represents 0.27 percent of the 922,280 children enrolled in Arizona public schools as of October 1, 2001.

What Effect Do Multiple Disabilities Have on a Child?

Depending on the type and severity of a child's disabilities, he or she will most likely require on-going support in more than one major life skill area. A team of educators and therapists will work closely with the student and his/her family to plan a successful educational program. The individualized program will include a variety of supports to meet the student's educational, language, social, vocational, and functional skill development. Accommodations for medication schedules, special diets and adaptive equipment may be included.

An important part of the evaluation process is consideration of Assistive Technology (AT) services. AT can include a wide-range of services from low-technology page magnifiers to high-technology communication boards or computers.

The individual with multiple disabilities can engage in a wide variety of useful and satisfying activities in school, the community and workplace. Community-based instruction is an important part of the older student's plan and includes transition planning for post-school work and living arrangements after high school.

References

- Heward, W. L. & Orlansky, M. D. (1999). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing Co.
- National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (2000). *General information about severe and/or multiple disabilities, Fact Sheet #10*. Washington, DC: NICHCY.

Resources

Articles & Books

- French, C., Gonzalez, R. T., Tronson-Simpson, J.. (1998). *Caring for people with multiple disabilities: An interdisciplinary guide for caregivers*. San Antonio, TX: Psychological Corp.
- Downing, J. E. (2002). *Including students with severe and multiple disabilities in typical classrooms: Practical strategies for teachers*. 2nd Edition. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Holburn, S. and Vietze, P. editors (2002). *Person-Centered Care Planning: Research, practice and future directions*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Video Tapes

PLAI (Promoting Learning Through Active Interaction) A Guide to Early Communication with Young Children Who Have Multiple Disabilities, Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Videotapes and training materials catalog. Van Nuys, CA: Child Development Media, Inc., 5632 Van Nuys Blvd., #286, Van Nuys, CA 91401, (818) 994-0933, <http://www.childdevelopmentmedia.com/>

Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites

The Arc of Arizona, 5610 S. Central Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85040, 602-243-1787 or 800-252-9054, <http://www.arcofarizona.org/>

Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Developmental Disabilities, 1789 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85005, 602-542-0419, <http://www.de.state.az.us/ddd>

Arizona State School for the Deaf and the Blind, <http://www.asdb.state.az.us/>
1200 W. Speedway, P.O. Box 85000, Tucson, AZ 85754-5000, 520-770-3683
1000 E. Butler, #115, Flagstaff, AZ 86004, 928-774-0655.

DB-LINK (DeafBlind), <http://www.tr.wou.edu/dblink>

Enhancing Arizona's Parent Network (EAPN),

<http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/eapn>

National Federation of the Blind of Arizona 2624 N. Terrace St., Mesa, AZ 85203, 480-898-1188, www.nfbarizona.com

National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD), 100 Rt. 37, P.O. Box 8923, New Fairfield, CT 06812-8923, <http://www.rarediseases.org/>

Office for Children with Special Health Care Needs (OCSHCN), Arizona Department of Health Services, 1740 W. Adams, Rm. 300, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 800-232-1676 or 602-542-1475, <http://www.hs.state.az.us/phs/ocshcn>

Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 1535 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-364-4015 or 800-352-4558, www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona, 2600 N. Wyatt, Tucson, AZ 85712, 520-324-3150, <http://www.pilotparents.org/>

Raising Special Kids, 2400 N. Central, Ste. 200, Phoenix, AZ 85004, 602-242-4366 or 800-237-3007, <http://www.raisingpecialkids.org/>

TASH (The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps), 4026 E. Round Hill Dr., Phoenix, AZ 85028, 602-992-7885, <http://www.tash.org/>

United Cerebral Palsy, <http://www.ucpsa.org/>
Central AZ, Inc., 321 Hatcher St., #102
Phoenix, AZ 85021, 602-943-5472
Southern Arizona, Inc. 2315 E. Speedwa
Blvd., Tucson, AZ, 85711, 520-795-3108

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